4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

December 18, 2001

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks proposes to improve low-water boat launching facilities on Lake Frances. This would be a cooperative project with the Town of Valier, the Great Falls Chapter of Walleyes Unlimited, and the Pondera Canal and Reservoir Company.

During normal water years, boat launching on Lake Frances is accomplished at two or three established facilities, depending on water level. These sites are owned and maintained by the local community. However, none of these sites is functional during drought years (including 2000 and 2001) due to low water levels. In these low water years, the Town of Valier grades and maintains a roadway that leads to the tip of what is an island during normal water years. This island becomes connected to the mainland in low-water years and is therefore no longer an island. Boats are launched off a natural gravelly area at the tip of the former island in drought years. Boaters have complained about soft, muddy conditions on the roadway during rainy periods; getting stuck in "soft" areas of the unimproved launching area; and having problems with high winds and waves at the exposed launching area at the tip of the former island.

Over the past several years, FWP has worked with Walleyes Unlimited and the local community to develop a plan to improve low-water access to this highly popular water-based recreation area. Several alternative sites and developments were considered, but the groups selected the option of improving the existing low-water access site in the "island" area as the most feasible solution. This project includes adding gravel to the existing low-water roadway and parking area, construction of a concrete boat ramp, and installation of a portable floating breakwater to reduce problems currently experienced by recreationists. If funds allow, repairs and maintenance of existing ramps, breakwaters, and parking areas may also be completed.

MDFWP has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment for public review and comment. Copies may be obtained by contacting FWP at 4600 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls 59405 or call 454-5840. The Environmental Assessment can also be accessed on the Internet at the FWP website: ***fwp.state.mt.us*** (click on "Public Notices"). Comments will be accepted until 5:00 PM, January 28, 2002. Contact Steve Leathe, Region 4 Fisheries Manager in Great Falls at 454-5855 if you need more information. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Mike Aderhold

Mike Aderhold
Region Four Supervisor

Pondera

Draft
Environmental Assessment

LAKE FRANCES
ACCESS IMPROVEMENT

December 2001

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Pondera

DRAFT
MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of Proposed State Action** Improve access road and parking, construct boat ramp, install floating breakwater, repair concrete breakwater, build accessible loading ramp, at Lake Frances, Montana.

2. **Agency Authority for the Proposed Action**
The Dingell-Johnson bill was passed in the U.S. Legislature August 9, 1950 and was amended to the Wallop-Breaux bill in 1984. A percentage of funds spent on fishing equipment and motorboat associated fuel is apportioned back to the states based on the land and water area and the number of fishing licenses sold. This bill requires that 15% of these funds are spent on motorboat access projects. Twenty-five percent of the total project cost must be from non-federal funds.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Town of Valier, Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company, Great Falls Chapter of Walleyes Unlimited, and Fish, Wildlife and Parks outlines the cooperative efforts to construct, operate and maintain the project and guarantee public access to federally funded facilities.

3. **Name of Project**
Lake Frances Access Improvement

4. **Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)**
Sponsored by Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) and
Great Falls Chapter of Walleyes Unlimited, P.O. Box 937, Great Falls, MT 59403-0937, no phone
Town of Valier, PO Box 512, Valier, MT 59486, 406-279-3721
Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company, P.O. Box 245, Valier, MT 59486, 406-279-3315

5. **If Applicable:**

Estimated Construction/Commencement Date	Spring 2002
Estimated Completion Date	Spring 2002
Current Status of Project Design (% complete)	50%

6. **Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)**
Lake Frances can be reached by traveling 67 miles north from Great Falls on Interstate 91; take Exit #348, then turn west on Valier Road/Highway 44 and travel about 15 miles to the Town of Valier; follow Teton Avenue southeast to the town park and boat ramps on the north shore of Lake Frances. Pondera County, Montana, Township 29 North, Range 5 West, S½ Section 4 and N½ Section 9; and NE¼NE¼ Section 23.

7. **Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

(a) Developed:
residential ..... ___ acres
industrial..... ___ acres

(b) Open Space/Woodlands/
Recreation.....6 acres

(c) Wetlands/Riparian
Areas..... ___ acres

(d) Floodplain..... ___ acres

(e) Productive:
irrigated cropland..... ___ acres
dry cropland..... ___ acres
forestry ..... ___ acres
rangeland..... ___ acres
other ..... ___ acres

8. **Map/site plan: attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.**

Please refer to Appendix 2 to locate the proposed project areas. Appendix 3 illustrates the island boat ramp and parking area plan. Plans have not been drawn for the east end parking area. Other improvements will coincide with the existing routes and use patterns.

9. **Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action or Project including the Benefits and Purpose of the Proposed Action.**

It is proposed to improve the existing road leading to the island in Lake Frances, improve parking, and construct a double-width concrete boat ramp at the island location currently used for launching, and install a portable, floating breakwater. Parking above the existing town ramps would be slightly improved with grading and about three inches of gravel. The lake would then be accessible for nearly the entire recreation season by using one of the four boat ramps. The project would compliment the fish cleaning station funded by a federal aid Wallop-Breaux grant through FWP, and also the existing facilities provided and maintained by the Town of Valier, including a campground, flush toilets, and a RV dump station.

Lake Frances is used for irrigation, fishing, recreation, and City of Conrad drinking water. Typical annual precipitation patterns allow use of the four existing boat ramps for boat launching/loading about eight out of ten years. The private ramp at the Lighthouse Restaurant and two town ramps are accessible at full pool elevations. As water levels drop, the east end ramp, owned by PCCRC, becomes the only useable ramp. Summer fishing and boating recreation on Lake Frances has been limited the last four years by inadequate low-water access. These three ramps have not allowed boat access. After the lake drops an additional two feet (between 3,804-3,802 feet above sea level), boaters can drive down the existing Valier Town Park boat ramps onto what characteristically is an island to launch boats. The south side of the island provides enough depth and bank grade to launch and load. The Town of Valier has graded the pioneered road and added some gravel in certain areas. The entire road and ramp area is below the high pool elevation. The amount of time when lake access is unavailable (lake elevation is too low for access at the east end, but too high to access the island) is contingent upon annual precipitation, irrigation use, and amount of water released from upstream reservoirs.

FWP Statewide Angler Pressure estimated 14,700 anglers in 1999. Weekend summer creel surveys indicate that 100% of these anglers were fishing from boats in 2000. This has risen from 1995, when 88% were boat anglers. It is surmised that this increase in percentage of boating anglers is due to the low water conditions, which makes it difficult to access the lake by foot and reach productive fishing areas. This illustrates the need for a low water boat ramp on Lake Frances.

The existing road to the island begins at the northern town ramp and follows the highest elevation route below high pool level. The road is about one mile long and will be improved to include about six inches of road base and gravel. Some areas may need excavating to allow the addition of gravel, but retain the existing grade. Geo-tech fabric may be installed for a distance of about 600 feet to allow vehicle passage and road stability at times when the ground is still moist. PCCRC owns the property proposed for improvement.

FWP Design and Construction Bureau has found the most cost effective and long lasting boat ramp is a poured cement ramp with flexible concrete planks or mat at the lowest end. The new ramp is planned at about 32 feet wide (double width, unless funding restricts it to a single width) and about 54 feet long at a 12-14% grade, which is adequate for boat launching and loading. Other sites considered for launch improvements had about 4% grade, which would require major excavation and expense to attain a minimum 10% grade to enable launching. Construction would take place in early Spring to take advantage of low water levels.

Parking on the island will be graded to the existing contours and covered with about six inches of gravel. The amount of parking will vary depending on water level, but plans allow for a parking area about the same size as that above the town ramps. Vehicle traffic around and across the island will be discouraged to protect wildlife habitat by using temporary, movable barriers or signs. Barriers must be portable, such as self-supporting posts with connecting rope or chain, to move when water levels fluctuate and avoid underwater boating hazards.

The proposed floating, portable breakwater can be used on the west side of the new ramp or at the town ramps with higher water levels. It will extend 100-200 feet from shore with a bend in the middle for maximum ramp area protection. The breakwater considered for use is made of orange or white, high-strength polyethylene barrels with pockets for wave attenuation. A grid pattern will be used for the most effective wave reduction. It will be anchored to shore and offshore with concrete blocks. The offshore anchor at the town ramp location can be buried nearly to the top to reduce the boating risk when water levels drop. When removal is required, the barrels can be moved and drained for storage.

It is also proposed as part of this project to remove the silt at the bottom of the east end ramp to allow maximum depths for launching. Deposition is nearly a foot deep at the end of the ramp and must be removed every year or two.

Site Management

A long-term Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being negotiated between FWP, town of Valier, Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company (PCCRC) and the Great Falls Chapter of Walleyes Unlimited. Fish, Wildlife & Parks has agreed to apply for and administer Wallop-Breaux federal funds for the project, complete the environmental assessment process, design and oversee the construction project. The MOU will also outline which of the other parties is responsible for specific operations and maintenance of the site after construction, such as:

- install, remove and store the floating breakwater annually,
- routine maintenance on ramps, road, parking areas,
- move parking barriers as water levels rise/fall,
- guarantee public access, and
- control weeds.

A similar MOU is currently in place for the operation and maintenance of a fish cleaning station installed about three years ago with funding from a federal aid Wallop-Breaux grant.

Funding

Funding is proposed through 75% FWP Wallop-Breaux motorboat appropriations matched with 25% non-federal funds. If the full $200,000 is not needed for construction, or the full $50,000 match is not acquired, the proportionate amount of Wallop-Breaux funds would also be reduced to retain the 75:25 ratio match. The use of these funds is contingent upon U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approval of the project.

Options to be completed in addition to the above proposal, contingent on funding and the MOU:

- Repair/improve existing concrete breakwater at southern town ramp. The fines under this concrete structure are eroding causing the concrete to fail and creating a safety hazard. It is proposed to back fill the existing holes, then cover the structure with fabric and riprap to reduce water action on the underlying fines. Riprap would be keyed into the lakebed and placed on the on the windward bank.

- Improve and designate parking on PCCRC land (about eight acres) above the east end boat ramp. Vehicles currently drive along the shoreline to reach the boat ramp, park and travel much of the eastern shoreline when water levels are low. Because this ramp is adjacent to the outlet pipe leading to Conrad's drinking water supply, water quality and the potential for contamination is a concern. Fill, grading and gravel would be required to provide an access road and parking area above the high water mark. Barriers would be needed to restrict the established use of the areas below the full pool line.

- Construct an accessible loading ramp at the city boat ramp parking area. It is difficult for people with disabilities to enter and exit a boat when in the water. A loading ramp would allow a vehicle pulling a boat to approach, then the person with the disability would use the ramp to transfer into the boat prior to launching. The ramp would have an 8% or less grade and perhaps handrails.

The project will result in more consistent motorboat use, angling and recreational use of Lake Frances. Due to the unreliability of a natural boat ramp on the island and associated hazards to boats and launching vehicles, many people do not participate in boat angling and recreation when water levels are lower than 3,804 feet when a developed ramp can not be used.

10. **Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.**

(a) **Permits:** all permits will be filed by FWP or the contractor 3-4 weeks prior to construction

Agency Name	Permit
FWP	124 Permit-Water Quality Protection Act
Army Corps of Engineers	404 Fill Permit
Pondera County Weed District	Weed Permit

(b) **Funding**

Agency Name	Funding Amount
FWP – Federal Wallop-Breaux motorboat funds	$150,000
non-federal funds	$50,000
Total	$200,000

(c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities**

Agency Name	Type of Responsibility
State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	cultural site protection
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	approval to use federal funding
Memorandum of Understanding	ensure operations & maintenance, guarantee public access after project completion

11. **List of Agencies Consulted during Preparation of the EA.**

Fish, Wildlife and Parks Division
- Fisheries Division
- Wildlife Division
- Design and Construction Bureau
- Nongame Species Coordinator
- Federal Aid Coordinator

State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Natural Heritage Program (Natural Resources Information System)
United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (soils)
Pondera County Department of Revenue (taxes)

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. LAND RESOURCES **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACT☼				Can Impact Be Mitigated∋	Comment Index
	Unknown∋	None	Minor∋	Potentially Significant		
<a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?			X positive		yes	1a.
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		yes	1b.
<c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				1c.
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?			X		yes	1d.
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1a. No changes in geologic substructure will occur. The soil stability will be slightly increased with the use of Geo-tech material in a 600 foot section of the road leading to the island. This will allow vehicle travel while the soil is still moist without degrading the road. Repair of the town ramp breakwater and use of the floating breakwater will also increase soil stability.

The project at the town ramp and island will improve the existing road, boat launching area and delineate parking, none of which are productive, nor have any vegetative growth due to previous grading and high use. The area is below the high pool level, rocky and highly disturbed. Improving the road and boat ramp will aid in protecting the island banks from possible damaging use when soils are still wet. The only area with potential to be disturbed in a way that would reduce productivity and fertility is the development of a parking area above the east end ramp. Again, this area is already disturbed by vehicles accessing the lake on various two track roads and parking. This area is above the high pool level and does produce some various grasses. A parking area will confine use, allowing other surrounding areas to reclaim for greater production and fertility.

1c. Unique geologic or physical features are not present within the construction area.

1d. The modifications of existing use and facilities will result in very minor changes in siltation, deposition and erosion. The improvements to the road bed and town ramp breakwater, and installation of a concrete boat ramp will increase the stability of these areas. Construction will occur while water levels are low, therefore equipment will not be in the water. The end of the ramp may include flexible concrete cable matt or concrete planks, which would be installed with a crane to a water depth of about three feet. Temporary erosion controls will be used during construction to reduce erosion and deposition. A minor amount of siltation will be produced for a short time after construction when water levels cover the building areas. The floating breakwater will reduce wave action and erosion at the boat ramp areas. Improving the town ramp breakwater will also stabilize that section of lake shore.

∋ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

☼ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

☼☼ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

2. AIR **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACT[3]				Can Impact Be Mitigated[3]	Comment Index
	Unknown[3]	None	Minor[3]	Potentially Significant		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))			X		yes	2a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-I projects, will the project result in any discharge which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		X				
f. Other N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2a. Minor and temporary amounts of dust are anticipated during construction of roads, parking areas, town breakwater repair and boat ramp. Gravel surfaces on the island road may reduce dust levels compared to the current dirt surface. The construction perimeter disturbed at the new east end parking area will be seeded after project completion to encourage vegetative growth and reduce future dust. No other ambient air qualities will be altered.

[3] Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3. WATER **Will the proposed action result in:**	IMPACT∋				Can Impact Be Mitigated∋	Comment Index
	Unknown∋	None	Minor∋	Potentially Significant		
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		yes	3a.
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		yes	3b.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of flood water or other flows?		X				3c.
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?			X positive			3e.
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?			X		yes	3h.
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				3j.
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in rface or groundwater quantity?		X				3k.
∝∝l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		X				3c.
∝m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		X				3a.
n. Other: N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3a. Because most of the proposed project is below the high pool level, the lake in these areas will become turbid for a short time after water levels rise above the construction zone. The east end parking area will not create additional turbidity; however, temporary erosion controls are required by FWP contracts. Removing silt from the existing ramp will disturb deposited soil, resulting in minor and temporary turbidity when water levels rise. Because this is in a long bay and work can be completed while water levels are below the ramp, the sediment should settle quickly. A Water Quality Protection Act (124 Permit) will be acquired prior to the project start. This permit application will be reviewed by the area FWP Fisheries Biologist to ensure that proper water quality mitigation methods are incorporated.

3b. The island road, ramp, parking, and town ramp breakwater improvements will not change the rate or amount of surface runoff, since existing surfaces will not be hardened or slopes significantly changed. The east end parking area may require excavation or fill to create a parking area large enough to accommodate vehicles with trailers and turn around space. This would change the area drainage patterns. FWP Design and Construction engineers or hired consultants will evaluate the needs for

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culverts and specific grading required to accommodate water events. Best Management Practices will be followed to ensure proper design and drainage. Gravel surfaces will maintain a low rate of runoff.

3c. Lake Frances is a controlled reservoir primarily used for irrigation, and therefore, the reservoir and project area are not considered a designated floodplain., according to Steve Leathe, FWP fisheries manager. Dupuyer Creek and Birch Creek fed from Swift Dam are the main sources of water for Lake Frances. Irrigation use also determines flows in and out of the lake. The

3e. Installation of the floating breakwater will reduce the risks at both the town ramp and the new island ramp when launching/loading boats in windy weather and rough water common at Lake Frances. Repairing the town ramp breakwater will eliminate a safety hazard and increase the efficiency of the breakwater, thus protecting boaters better as they launch or load.

3h. Delineating a parking area above the east end ramp will reduce the petroleum spills from parked vehicles below the high pool elevation and the risk of contaminating water adjacent to Conrad's drinking water supply. Conversely, improvement of the island access area will encourage vehicle parking below the high pool level and increase the potential for vehicle fuel/oil spills. Restricting use to the end of the island will help limit the chances of contamination by vehicles traveling around the island.

3j. Lake Frances is primarily operated for irrigation purposes, though the City of Conrad owns 2,500 water shares to supply drinking water. There will be no noticeable effects on these water users as a result of this project, barring accidental spills discussed in number 3h., above. The new road will remain at the existing grade. The boat ramp will be constructed of poured concrete or stable, yet flexible concrete planks or matting. Construction will cause minimal turbidity on the opposite side of the lake from the Conrad water source outlet.

3k. The reservoir water quantity will not change due to this project. The road and parking area grades will remain at the same level with minor gravel additions to provide stability.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT[ə]				Can Impact Be Mitigated[ə]	Comment Index
	Unknown[ə]	None	Minor[ə]	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		yes	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c.
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				??
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		yes	4e.
ɑɑf. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				4f.
g. Other: N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4a. All ground in the main project area is currently disturbed by vehicle traffic. The road to the island boat launching area is heavily used and graded, thus eliminating all vegetation. The launching area where the new parking area and ramp will be constructed is void of vegetation, consisting of a large cobble surface. The town breakwater does not have permanent vegetation in this area. The concrete breakwater is surrounded by rock and other concrete pieces.

ə Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

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ɑɑ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

The east end ramp parking area has limited growth due to vehicles accessing the lake via various pioneered routes. Some common area grasses would be removed or covered for parking area grading and gravel. The parking area would be located over the existing use area to minimize the impacts to vegetation.

4c. A database search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program on October 10, 2001 revealed no plant species of concern in the ject area.

4e. Areas disturbed by construction will be prone to the establishment of noxious weeds. Small populations of Canada thistle and musk thistle are located at the island road, boat ramp and parking area, and at the east end area.

4f. After visiting the site and reviewing the proposed project area, both the FWP Regional Fisheries Manager and the area Wildlife Biologist indicated that there were no wetlands that will be altered by this project. The areas directly affected by construction are void of vegetation. The east end ramp is above the high pool level and consists of well drained range/grassland type cover.

Lanny Walker, District Conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Conrad, spoke with Sue Dalbey on October 10, 2001, after reviewing the soil survey maps for the construction area. He confirmed that there are no soils considered prime and unique farmlands in the proposed project area, including the east end parking area. Soils below the normal pool elevation (road and boat ramp) were considered similar to those surveyed along the shoreline in those areas.

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Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

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PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

< 5. FISH/WILDLIFE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT[3]				Can Impact Be Mitigated[3]	Comment Index
	Unknown[3]	None	Minor[3]	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?			X		yes	5a.
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f.
g. Increase conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
¤¤h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		X				
¤i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		X				
j. Other: N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

FWP Region 4 Fisheries Manager Steve Leathe toured the site with Sue Dalbey on September 21, 2001. He indicated that Lake nces is one of the most heavily fished waters in the region, especially during years of low precipitation when other lakes are ary. Walleye and northern pike are the most common sport fish, but the reservoir also supports yellow perch and burbot. Longnose suckers, white suckers and spottail shiners are the most common nongame fish. There are no species of concern in the reservoir. Walleye and northern pike are spring spawners, coinciding with anticipated construction; however, these species are tolerant of high sediment. Leathe expects turbidity to be limited from the project. He considers the improved access important to providing angling opportunities at Lake Frances and the region. Leathe does not anticipate any noteworthy impacts to the fisheries population or habitat as a result of this project. The project has little affect on winter angling, because the reservoir can be accessed from all of the boat ramps when the lake is iced over.

FWP Fisheries Biologist Bill Hill visited with Sue Dalbey on October 11, 2001. Summer creel surveys under his direction show 88-100% of anglers use boats to fish, verses fishing from shore. Hill indicated that the proposed improvements will increase use, but is not expected to impact fish populations. He encouraged careful positioning of the island ramp and breakwater to enable continued us of shoreline launching when the site is busy. Occasionally 20-45 vehicles will be using the island for lake access and some congestion may be avoided if boaters with smaller vessels wish to load/launch on the bank. The concrete ramp will be a definite improvement for larger boat access.

FWP area Wildlife Biologist Gary Olson also met Dalbey on site on September 21, 2001. Based on the high amount of activity already taking place on the island, Olson considers the proposed project a positive improvement. It will help localize use and limit travel across the island, which provides nesting habitat for Canada geese, blue herons and gulls. The closest heron rookery is located about 150 yards from the boat ramp. Neither construction or later public use of the ramp is expected to disturb the herons. The public already launches boats in the immediate vicinity of where the concrete ramp would be constructed with little or no affect to the heron rookery. If the parking area can be delineated and restricted around the main ramp and parking area, this will

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Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

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reduce travel close to the rookeries across the island. Travel is currently unrestricted on the island. Geese nest above the high pool level in the grasses, therefore the project proposed below the high pool level will not significantly affect geese activity. The lake and shoreline is used by a variety of waterfowl. A few upland birds and whitetail deer also use the area. No species of concern are known to inhabit this area.

FWP Nongame Coordinator Dennis Flath spoke with Sue Dalbey on October 10, 2001 and suggested that spring migrant shorebirds may temporarily use Lake Frances for a resting place on their way north. This would be a fast transition, with birds arriving and departing for a period of a week or ten days in mid-April. The primary flyway includes Benton Lake and Freezeout Lake, but Lake Frances may be used by some outlying birds such as avocets or phaloropes. He also recommended restricting travel to designated parking areas to protect shoreline and ground nesting birds on the island.

5a. Some slight and temporary amounts of turbidity will be caused by the boat ramp construction and cleaning of the east end ramp. Temporary erosion controls are a standard contract requirement on FWP projects to limit impacts of this nature.

5f. A database search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program did not reveal any species of concern in the construction area. Breeding pairs of ferruginous hawks were identified south of Lake Frances in 1997. Biologist Gary Olson and Nongame Coordinator Dennis Flath confirmed the lack of species of concern in this area and that the proposed project will not impact rare animal species.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT[3]				Can Impact Be Mitigated[3]	Comment - Index
	Unknown[3]	None	Minor[3]	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6a.
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other: N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6a. A temporary increase in noise will occur during construction due to the use of heavy equipment to complete the project. Equipment such as graders, dump trucks, front end loaders, etc. will be necessary.

[3] Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

7. LAND USE Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT[ɔ] Unknown[ɔ]	None	Minor[ɔ]	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated[ɔ]	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflict with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				7c.
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other: N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7c. The land proposed for construction is owned by the Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company whose primary emphasis is with irrigation water storage and supply. The project has a low elevation profile and will not alter the reservoir capacity or create irrigation barriers. No conflicts with the existing use of the area are anticipated.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

8. RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT[ɔ] Unknown[ɔ]	None	Minor[ɔ]	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated[ɔ]	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		yes	8a.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X positive			8c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)			X		yes	8a.
e. Other: N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8a. Herbicides may be used to control noxious weeds by the agency that maintains the island area, town ramps and parking areas, or east end ramp and parking area. The county weed board will review the project prior to construction and suggest weed application methods that limit the risk of accidents or contamination.

8c. The addition of a breakwater will decrease the risks involved when loading or launching boats in rough water. Providing a solid road and ramp will increase safety when accessing the lake, as well.

ɔ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

ɑ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

ɑɑ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT[3]				Can Impact Be Mitigated[3]	Comment Index
	Unknown[3]	None	Minor[3]	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?			X		yes	9a.
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?			X positive			9c.
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X positive			9e.
f. Other: _____ N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9a. The island area is the only public area to launch boats during extreme low water levels; therefore, people are already concentrated at the island. It is the intention of this improvement project to encourage use of the island for launching during low water levels. The human density on the island will slightly increase. The impacts of more people and vehicles here can be reduced by creating delineated use areas and restricting use outside these areas. The project will protect the site, wildlife and result in more efficient use of the site.

9c. A stable access road and developed low water boat ramp will increase regional use of the reservoir, and therefore, should slightly enhance the economic status of the Town of Valier. The project will encourage use of the town's existing camping facilities and the fish cleaning station funded by FWP several years ago. Angler use will slightly increase, resulting in the sale of more fishing licenses and tackle. Other recreational amenities may be purchased in neighboring towns, too, such as fuel, groceries, lodging, and meals.

9e. The project will reduce traffic hazards when accessing the island and launching boats on unstable ground. Delineated areas aid in efficient and stable launching routes and parking for more vehicles in a smaller area.

[3] Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT[3]				Can Impact Be Mitigated[3]	Comment Index
	Unknown[3]	None	Minor[3]	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify: road and ramp maintenance, weed abatement, floating breakwater maintenance			X		yes	10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				10b.
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
< e. Define projected revenue sources						10e.
< f. Define projected maintenance costs.						10f.
g. Other: N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10a. Maintenance and operation of the constructed facilities will be assumed by agencies other than FWP as outlined in the MOU. The improved road and parking areas will require periodic grading and the ramp may need sediment removed annually. Weeds will need to be controlled. The portable floating breakwater will require installing, removing and storage for periods during the year. These costs should not appreciably increase due to the current presence of the Town of Valier and PCCRC managing other sites in the area.

10b. The Pondera County Department of Revenue checked the tax records for Sue Dalbey on October 10, 2001 and found that the land and island area are considered part of the Lake Frances water body and are not charged taxes. This assessment is not expected to change after the improvement project. Tax records also indicated that about eight acres at the east end parking area is owned by PCCRC and is assessed at a private utility rate. It, too, is expected to remain assessed at the same rate if the parking area is improved. No changes in tax revenue are anticipated due to the proposed project.

10e. FWP will apply for the use of $150,000 Wallop-Breaux funds to be used if the full non-federal matching funds are provided of $50,000, or 25% of the total construction cost. If the full $200,000 is not needed for construction, or the full $50,000 match not acquired, the proportionate amount of Wallop-Breaux funds would also be reduced to retain the 25:75 ratio match.

No fees will be collected for the use of this site.

10f. Annual maintenance costs will depend on the precipitation and lake levels. If the island road and ramp remain out of the water for most of the year and for consecutive years, the road may require grading more often due to heavy use. If water levels cover the island access for a period and deposition is low, the road and parking areas may need grading and ramp cleaning only once annually. The Pondera Department of Revenue indicated that the town boundary stopped at the water line, and the county generally assumed road maintenance outside the town. Road maintenance activities are typically funded by mill levies assessed in the county or town, therefore the proposed action may require a mill levy increase to cover additional road maintenance.

[3] Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

[4] Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

[4][4] Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

Maintenance and operation of the floating breakwater may be done with significant in-kind work and equipment use, thus limiting costs.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION	IMPACT[3]					
Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown[3]	None	Minor[3]	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated[3]	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X			11a.
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)			X positive			11c.
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		X				
e. Other: N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The Valier/Lake Frances area is an agricultural area with generally level to gently rolling famlands; cottonwood trees line the shores of Lake Frances and the island. Lake Frances was built for irrigation; however, it is also heavily used for recreation. It is one of the heaviest fished reservoirs in the region, receiving 14,700 angler days in 1999 (FWP Statewide Angler Pressure Estimates), of which 88-100% are boat anglers. The draw down for irrigation, however, makes the lake inaccessible for parts of the year, especially during years of low precipitation. The town operates a campground and park with RV dump station, water, and flush restrooms. A fish cleaning station was installed about three years ago by FWP and is maintained by the Town of Valier. The proposed project will complement these amenities and provide higher and more consistent recreational use on Lake Frances, particularly during the peak summer period characterized by low water.

11a. The project will improve structures already in place and heavily used. The existing road is graded and well defined. The island parking area will become obvious due to gravel additions and portable perimeter stands. The breakwater will be a highly visible change to the lake vista. It is intentionally visible for safety reasons. Repair to the town breakwater will be a very slight change aesthetically, but toward a more natural look with the addition of riprap to support and cover the failing cement. The parking area upgrade at the east end will not be visible from the lake, but will be highly visible from the adjacent county road.

11c. The quality of recreation opportunities will be increased with improved roads to a new boat ramp on the island. Lack of easy access to Lake Frances during low water levels has been a deterrent to recreationists during any period of low water. An additional opportunity is provided to a certain number of people who will not launch their boat on an undeveloped or natural ramp.

[3] Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT[ɔ]				Can Impact Be Mitigated[ɔ]	Comment Index
	Unknown[ɔ]	None	Minor[ɔ]	Potentially Significant		
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
ɑɑd. For P-R/D-I, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? **Attach SHPO letter of clearance.** (Also see 12.a)		X				See Appendix 5
e. Other: N/A						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12a. No unique properties have been located within the main project area, which is below the normal pool level and improvements to existing structures, such as the town ramp breakwater and town parking area. SHPO did provide clearance for the primary project. A cultural survey may be required, however, if the east end parking area is improved. The FWP Cultural Coordinator will consult with SHPO prior to construction if funding is available to complete this east end parking area improvement.

ɔ Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

ɑ Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

ɑɑ Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT[3]				Can Impact Be Mitigated[3]	Comment Index
	Unknown[3]	None	Minor[3]	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
[2]f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		X				
[2][2]g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.						See Part I, #10

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

The general support for this project originated from the local Walleyes Unlimited chapter, and includes the Town of Valier and the Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company; therefore, public controversy is not expected. No significant changes to the man or physical environment are anticipated because the project is basically improving existing use.

[3] Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

[2] Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

[2][2] Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action, whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider, and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative 1. No Action.
If no action is taken at Lake Frances, existing use will continue, however the potential for environment degradation will continue from use of the island road when moist. Low water levels will continue to limit boat access to the lake; thus, reducing the recreational use of the lake, neighboring town recreation facilities, and potential economic gain to the area economy.

Alternative 2. Build up road and build new boat ramp at Lighthouse Restaurant, construct riprap breakwater.
This was the first alternative considered by representatives from Walleyes Unlimited and FWP in mid 1999. The shoreline slope at the Lighthouse site was only 3% at the low water's edge. Two options were reviewed at this site, both included large amounts of fill that would extend 400 feet into the lake when at normal pool elevation. The extension was needed to provide a grade to successfully launch a typical walleye fishing boat. A 10% slope is the minimum recommended by FWP engineering staff to avoid vehicles needing to back into the water over the floorboards. With the addition of riprap, this alternative was estimated to cost $50,000 to $100,000, and perhaps still would not allow access at the lowest lake levels recorded later in 1999.

Alternative 3. Extend east end ramp.
This alternative was not highly considered due to its distance from Valier, limited developable area, and steep terrain. At very low water levels, the bay does not provide sufficient water depth even if the ramp extended to the middle of the bay.

Alternative 4. Acquire and develop Boumans Point near the east end ramp.
This was a highly unlikely alternative due to private landownership. This site, however, had a good shoreline slope, a significant amount of developable space and excellent all-water-level access point.

Alternative 5. Extend southern town boat ramp, excavate bay, build rock breakwater.
This was the second option thoroughly explored by FWP in 2000, and although it seemed logical to expand an existing facility, the cost was prohibitive. Cost estimates totaled $373,000 to complete a boat ramp that would provide access during low water periods. Excavation of the bay down to useable elevations and supply/placement of the riprap breakwater were 75% of the cost. This alternative was eliminated from further investigation since funds to this extent were not available.

Alternative 6. Improve existing road, install *cable mat* boat ramp, install floating breakwater, improve boat ramp parking area, options as funding allows.
This alternative is comparable to the Preferred Alternative, however the cable mat boat ramp is twice the cost of a poured cement ramp. The advantage to a cable mat is that it can be reset if the sides erode due to wave action. This alternative does address the potential degradation of the island road when soils are moist, designating parking on the island and protecting boaters when launching and loading with a breakwater structure. The use of a floating breakwater also reduces costs considerably. It is unlikely that funding would be available to complete either the additional options of repairing the town ramp breakwater and/or upgrading the east end parking area if Alternative 6 is implemented. Physical and human environmental impacts would be similar to the preferred alternative. A consultant would be hired to finalize plans and oversee the project, along with FWP Design and Construction staff. The project would be opened for competitive contractor bids.

Alternative 7. Preferred Alternative: Proposed Action to improve existing road, construct *poured cement and cable mat* boat ramp, install floating breakwater, improve boat ramp parking area, improve town parking area, options as funding allows.
This project is costly, however, funding has been identified to allow this improvement. Costs were reduced from Alternative 6 by installing a poured concrete ramp, rather than a cable mat ramp. This is a very functional ramp constructed at a lower price. The floatable breakwater can be used at both the town ramp and the island ramp. It is more likely that one of the options can be completed with the savings that this alternative provides. A consultant would be hired to engineer the project and the project would be opened for competitive contractor bids. FWP Design and Construction Bureau would oversee the project.

3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

Soil stability will be increased by using Geo-tech mat to spread weight on the road. Repair of the town breakwater and floating breakwater will also stabilize the shoreline.

Soil productivity alterations will be extremely limited by planning the improvements to areas already disturbed by heavy use. Confining vehicle use will allow other areas to reclaim for greater production and fertility.

Temporary erosion controls are standard FWP construction requirements. The floating breakwater will reduce wave action and erosion at the boat ramp areas. Dust will be reduced at the east end parking area by seeding disturbed areas immediately after construction.

All construction can take place out of the water when levels are low to reduce turbidity, sedimentation, deposition. The Water Quality Protection Act (124 Permit) must be applied for and reviewed by the Fisheries Biologist to ensure proper water quality mitigation methods are used. Restricting vehicle access to the island and areas below high pool elevation at the east end ramp will reduce risks of contaminating water from petroleum spills.

Noxious weeds will be controlled by one of the existing land management entities in the area.

Turbidity will be limited by completing construction above water levels and with the use of temporary erosion controls during construction.

The increases in governmental services will be minimized by the on-going maintenance and operations contributions from the local Walleyes Unlimited and the PCCRC.

4. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO
If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

This environmental review revealed no significant negative impacts from the proposed action; therefore, an EIS is not necessary and an Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis.

5. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on the EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Two legal notices each in the Conrad Independent Observer and Helena Independent Record newspapers.
- One regionwide press release.
- Public Notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: *http://fwp.state.mt.us/notices/default.asp.*

Copies of the EA will be mailed directly to the Town of Valier and the Pondera Canal and Reservoir Company to ensure their knowledge of the proposed action. Project area lands are controlled by these two parties. Letters will also be sent to organized groups in northcentral Montana who may have an interest in the project.

The opportunities for public input listed above are appropriate for the proposed actions since few negative environmental impacts are identified.

6. Duration of comment period if any:

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30) days following the publication of the second legal notice. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., January 28, 2002 and can be mailed to the address below:

Steve Leathe
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405

Or email comments to *sleathe@state.mt.us*

7. Name, title, address and phone number of the Person(s) Responsible for Preparing the EA:

Sue Dalbey
Independent Contractor
Dalbey Resources
926 N. Lamborn St.
Helena, MT 59601
406-443-8058

Allan Kuser
Fishing Access Site Coordinator
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
406-444-3750

Steve Leathe
Region 4 Fisheries Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
406-454-5840

[ ] G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: *Negative results on the cultural survey.*

[ ] H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: *None*

[ ] I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: *None*

[ ] J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: *Use will remain the same as historical use.*

If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.

APPENDIX 4
TOURISM REPORT
MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA)/HB495

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by HB495 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Victor Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
PO Box 200533
1424 9th Ave.
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Project Name: Lake Frances Access Improvement

Project Description: Lake Frances can be reached by traveling 67 miles north from Great Falls on Interstate 91; take Exit #348, then turn west on Valier Road/Highway 44 and travel about 15 miles to the town of Valier; follow Teton Avenue southeast to the city park and boat ramps on the north shore of Lake Frances. Pondera County, Montana, Township 29 North, Range 5 West, S½ Section 4 and N½ Section 9; and NE¼NE¼ Section 23.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?

   (circle one) NO (YES) If YES, briefly describe:

   As described, the project appears to improve public access to Lake Frances in all water level conditions. Improved access would benefit resident and non-resident users alike which will provide positive impacts to the state's tourism economy.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?

   (circle one) NO (YES) If YES, briefly describe:

   As described, the project appears to improve the quality and quantity of recreation/tourism opportunity.

Signature Victor V. Bjornberg Date Nov 28, 2001

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